

VZCZCXRO1516
PP RUEHDBU RUEHPW RUEHSL
DE RUEHBUL #3973/01 3431518
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
P 091518Z DEC 09
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3890
INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 003973

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/09/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: KARZAI SAYS NATIONAL SECURITY MINISTERS WILL STAY

REF: A. KABUL 3865

[1](#)B. KABUL 3799

Classified By: Acting PolCouns V. Alvarado; reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (S) Summary: President Karzai told us on December 7 that he was considering a change in the Ministry of Interior, but after consulting with Ambassador Ricciardone, he assured us he would keep the National Security ministers in place (Defense, Interior, and NDS). Karzai reassured us again of this on December 8 when he met with Defense Secretary Gates. Separately, Palace staff and Commerce Minister Shahrani indicated that the following seven ministers would not change: Interior, Finance, Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Health and NDS. He noted the delay in the announcement of the ministers was in part due to internal debates among the former mujahadeen, including Prof. Rabbani's insistence that Ismail Khan receive a key position, and Abdul Sayyaf's assertion that Atmar leave. Meanwhile, Parliament voiced concern that Karzai had failed to meet his promise to send all of the cabinet names to them by December 8, despite their two-week extension. End Summary.

- - - - -
DEBATE OVER ATMAR, ISMAIL KHAN
- - - - -

[1](#)2. (S) President Karzai told Charge' d'Affaires Ambassador Ricciardone in a one-on-one meeting on December 7 that he was considering the following individuals for the Interior Minister position: NDS Director Bismarullah Khan Saleh, Ministry of Defense Atmar, and Ismail Khan. Ambassador Ricciardone expressed concern that if the National Security institutions went through leadership changes at this critical juncture, they would lose many months of work and experience severe setbacks. Karzai said that if Atmar stayed on, Ismail Khan must stay on as Energy Ministry. Ambassador Ricciardone underscored that if key development ministries were not given to clean and competent leaders, the international community would limit investments in these ministries. Karzai requested that the Embassy engage with Qanooni, Fahim and Rabbani to "facilitate" the appointment process and impress upon them the importance of maintaining continuity in the National Security institutions (and not give corrupt and incompetent Ismail Khan a key position).

[1](#)3. (S) Karzai reassured Defense Secretary Gates and Ambassador Ricciardone on December 8 that he would not make any changes to the National Security institutions' leadership. Karzai gave significant speaking roles to Defense Minister Wardak, Interior Minister Atmar, and NDS Saleh on December 8 when they briefed Secretary Gates. These ministers gave substantive briefings and appeared confident that they will keep their positions. Separately, Palace Chief of Staff Daudzai told Ricciardone that there was discussion of moving Saleh to the Interior, noting significant pressure from Ismail Khan and MP Abdul Rab Rasoul Sayyaf (Kabul, Pashtun) to push Atmar out. Sayyaf and Ismail Khan have both blamed "people working in the government"

(read Atmar) as having been responsible for the recent assassination attempts against them. He added that Atmar was problematic because the former mujahadeen never trust him due to his previous connections with the Communists.

SEVEN MINISTERS TO STAY

14. (S) Commerce Minister Wahidullah Shahrani told Ambassador Wayne on December 8 that Karzai had met with the former mujahadeen leaders on December 7 to gain consensus on keeping the Ministers of Interior, Finance, Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Health and NDS. Shahrani said after a long discussion the "jihadis" agreed to the seven. He said the rest of the key Ministries (Energy, Public Works, Labor, Justice, Agriculture, Education, etc.) would be appointed with sensitivity to ethnic and regional balance issues. He also said Education Minister Farooq Wardaq might return to his previous position as the head of the Office of Administrative Affairs (OAA), and that this position's responsibilities would be expanded.

15. (S) Finance Minister Zakhiwal told Ambassador Wayne that Karzai would pick one of two good candidates for the Ministry of Mines, but he was concerned that Karzai might make the wrong choice for the Minister of Interior or the Director of the IDLG. (Note: Ismail Khan has been rumored to be in the running for either Interior, Energy, or IDLG. End Note.) Shahrani urged the U.S. to talk quietly to the Parliament leadership to explain the importance of good ministers in key places or "they could create serious problems."

KABUL 00003973 002 OF 002

PARLIAMENT WAITS, IMPATIENTLY

16. (SBU) Meanwhile, Parliament voiced concern on December 9 that Karzai had failed to meet his promise to send his cabinet names by December 8, despite the Parliament's extension of their ordinary session by two weeks in order to review the cabinet selections in a timely manner. The MPs in Parliament that made the request to extend the session, as well as those who demanded that Karzai send a complete list, were some of the most openly pro-Karzai MPs in the Parliament. This leads us to believe that Karzai requested both the extension of Parliament, and the delay, in order to buy him more time for negotiations. Some MPs claim Karzai also wants to wait for many of his conservative allies in the Parliament to return from their Hajj travels, so his nominations are approved without difficulty.

RICCIARDONE